



NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA STATE TREASURER PHIL ANGELIDES

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CALIFORNIA TREASURER PHIL ANGELIDES' MEMORIAL DAY 2006 STATEMENT:

In 1865, as Americans saw the coming end of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln spoke in his second inaugural address of the sacred debt the country owed to those who fought in the nation's defense: "Let us strive," said Lincoln, "...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan..."

Since September 11, 2001 nearly 14,000 men and women of the California Army and Air National Guard have been called to the front lines to defend America. Nearly 1,600 California Guard members are serving today in Iraq and Afghanistan or in support positions to those troops.

They have stood guard against terrorist attacks on our bridges, patrolled the skies against airborne attacks, and shipped out by the thousands to fight in Afghanistan and Iraq. At times, as many as half of the U.S. forces in Iraq have been National Guard or Reserve members called to active duty. Twenty of these were brave California Guard members who lost their lives in Iraq in this service to our nation.

Many more Californians in all branches of the nation's military have also placed their lives on the line in Iraq and Afghanistan. In all, more than 250 Californians have died in this service and many others have been wounded.

California and America are asking more of the National Guard – its members and their families – than ever before. California National Guard units have been called into combat for the first time since the Korean War, and many Guard members have been sent to Iraq for extended and repeated tours of active duty.

The shame is that currently, except when on active duty, one in five of these National Guard members has no health insurance, a figure that rises to 40 percent for junior enlisted men and women, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office. National Guard members receive health insurance for themselves and their families while they serve on active duty. But before they are activated, they have health insurance only if they are covered on their civilian jobs. After they return from active duty, they have health insurance only if they have it on the job or are able to buy into TRICARE, the military health care system. Benefits for California's National Guard members are among the nation's worst and the California Guard is facing difficulty recruiting new members.



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It is disgraceful to ask these men and women to protect us if we won't protect them against the financial risk of sickness and injury. It is both patriotic and fair to salute our troops by giving them and their families access to basic, affordable health care.

Last year I launched a statewide drive to pass legislation to provide basic health insurance for California National Guard members. The legislation, AB 1525, authored by Assemblymember Lloyd Levine (D-Van Nuys), sought to provide a refundable income tax credit of up to \$4,000 a year for health insurance premiums to cover Guard members and their families. The coverage would be paid for by closing an unjust corporate tax loophole – the nowhere income corporations earn that escapes taxation in any state. Closing this loophole, which would not result in any cost to ordinary taxpayers, would bring in enough revenue to offset the health insurance credit for all of California's National Guard troops.

“A new generation of soldiers are serving our nation,” said Assemblymember Levine, AB 1525's author. “It is simply unacceptable that some of these men and women will lack basic health care when they return home.”

Regrettably, AB 1525 did not pass. But I am as determined today as I was when the bill was introduced to find a way to provide insurance protection for the brave Californians who stand in defense of the nation. The Guard's service to California and its sacrifice to the nation demands this level of respect.

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